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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION REPORT - IRAN: EU-3 TALKS, NUCLEAR PROGRAM

PARIS - TUESDAY, MAY 24, 2005

(A) SUBJECTS COVERED IN TODAY'S REPORT:

IRAN: EU-3 TALKS, NUCLEAR PROGRAM

(B) SUMMARY OF COVERAGE:

WITH THE VOTE ON THE EU CONSTITUTION LOOMING, THE MAJORITY OF HEADLINES AND COMMENTARIES CONTINUE TO FOCUS ON THE FUTURE OF THE EU. GERHARD SCHROEDER'S DEFEAT IN A LEGISLATIVE ELECTION IN NORTH RHINE-WESTPHALIA AND HIS DECISION TO HOLD EARLY ELECTIONS ALSO DOMINATE MANY OF TODAY'S HEADLINES, THE MAJORITY OF WHICH CALL THE DECISION SCHROEDER'S "DOUBLE OR NOTHING."

RIGHT-OF-CENTER LE FIGARO PUBLISHES A NEW POLL THAT SHOWS THE "NO" LEADING BY 53 PERCENT WITH 71 PERCENT OF THOSE POLLED CLAIMING THAT THEY WILL NOT CHANGE THEIR MINDS. CATHOLIC LA CROIX'S FRONT-PAGE HEADLINE AND EDITORIAL HYPOTHESIZE: "WHAT IF FRANCE VOTES YES?" LA CROIX PUTS FORTH THAT A FRENCH "YES" WOULD MEAN THAT THE CONSTITUTION COULD BE IMPLEMENTED AS EARLY AS 2006 AND THAT IT WOULD GIVE IMPETUS TO THE REFERENDA THAT WILL BE HELD IN HOLLAND, LUXEMBURG AND DENMARK. CENTRIST BUSINESS-ORIENTED LA TRIBUNE INDICATES THAT THE "OUTCOME OF THE REFERENDUM COULD AFFECT THE PARITY BETWEEN THE EURO AND THE DOLLAR."

LEFT-OF-CENTER LE MONDE LEADS: "GERMANY, FRANCE AND HOLLAND: EUROPE IS HESITANT ABOUT ITS FUTURE," WHILE LEFT-OF-CENTER LIBERATION AND COMMUNIST L'HUMANITE ANALYZE THE FEAR IN FRANCE OF "SOCIAL DUMPING" AND "MASSIVE OUTSOURCING" SHOULD THE CONSTITUTION BE RATIFIED. THE EDITORIALS IN BOTH LIBERATION AND L'HUMANITE CONCLUDE THAT THE REFERENDUM IN FRANCE HAS AT LEAST HAD THE OF EFFECT SHEDDING LIGHT ON THIS FEAR AMONG FRENCH WORKERS.

RIGHT-OF-CENTER LE FIGARO'S LEADING INTERNATIONAL STORY CONCERNING IRAN IN LIGHT OF THE UPCOMING PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION AND THE AYATOLLAH KHAMENEI'S DECISION TO REVIEW BACK THE BAN ON TWO REFORMIST CANDIDATES IN RUNNING IN THE ELECTION AS WELL AS THE EU-3 MEETINGS TO DISCUSS IRAN'S NUCLEAR PROGRAM. THE MEETINGS IN BRUSSELS TODAY AND GENEVA TOMORROW OVER THE ISSUE OF IRAN'S NUCLEAR PROGRAM IS QUALIFIED AS A "LAST CHANCE" BY LE FIGARO, ADDING THAT THESE MEETINGS WILL BE "CLOSELY WATCHED BY WASHINGTON. WHICH IS CALLING ON EUROPEAN DIPLOMACY TO PROVE THAT IT IS CREDIBLE." (SEE PART C)

REPORTS ON THE UOIF'S (THE UNION OF ISLAMIC ORGANIZATIONS OF FRANCE) OPPOSITION TO THE "SECOND CHRONICLE OF FATWAS" PUBLISHED BY THE "EUROPEAN COUNCIL OF FATWAS" PROMPTS LEFT-OF-CENTER LE MONDE TO CALL THE CHRONICLE "EMBARRASSING" FOR THE UOIF AND THE CFCM (FRENCH MUSLIM COUNCIL) WHO FEAR THAT THIS TEXT WILL TARNISH THE IMAGE OF MODERATE MUSLIMS IN FRANCE.

(C) SUPPORTING TEXT/BLOCK QUOTES:

IRAN: EU-3 TALKS, NUCLEAR PROGRAM

"THE CHINESE WAY FOR IRAN"
BERNARD GEUTTA TOLD LISTENERS THIS MORNING ON STATE-RUN FRANCE INTER RADIO: "EVIDENTLY THE CHOICE OF THE NEW PRESIDENT IN IRAN HAS ALREADY BEEN MADE AND IT APPEARS THAT FORMER PRESIDENT RAFSANDJANI WILL WIN. WHILE MOHAMMAD KHATAMI WAS CONSIDERED TO BE THE IRANIAN GORBATCHEV, A MAN WHO DETERMINED TO LEAD HIS COUNTRY TOWARD DEMOCRACY, ALI-AKBAR RAFSANDJANI SEEMS TO PERSONIFY THE 'CHINESE WAY,' THAT IS TO SAY POLITICAL DICTATORSHIP COEXISTING WITH ECONOMIC LIBERALIZATION AND THE QUEST FOR A 'MODUS VIVENDI' WITH THE U.S. WITH THE FUTURE ELECTION OF ALI-AKBAR RAFSANDJANI, IRAN MAY REACH A HAND OUT TO THE U.S. THAT TODAY IT CONTINUES TO DEFY WITH ITS NUCLEAR AMBITIONS. RAFSANDJANI DREAMS OF AN HISTORIC COMPROMISE WITH THE U.S. THAT WOULD ENSURE IRAN'S DOMINATION IN THE REGION IN EXCHANGE FOR IT CONTRIBUTING TO THE STABILIZATION ON IRAQ AND PROMOTING THE DIALOGUE WITH ITS ARAB NEIGHBORS."

"IRAN'S NUCLEAR PROGRAM"
ON PRIVATE RTL RADIO, ISABELLE DATH COMMENTED (05/24): "THE

NEGOTIATIONS ON THE FUTURE OF IRAN'S NUCLEAR PROGRAM ARE CRUCIAL. IT IS A DANGEROUS GAME OF LIAR'S POKER. THE IRANIANS ARE PLAYING WITH THE EUROPEANS' NERVES. AND THE WEST NO LONGER TRUSTS THIS COUNTRY WHICH FOR THE LAST 18 YEARS HAS BEEN TRYING TO HIDE ITS NUCLEAR ACTIVITIES. IRAN IS ALSO ENTERING A TACTICAL PHASE WITH THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION ON JUNE 17. FACED WITH THE OUTCRY WITHIN THE COUNTRY AS WELL AS ABROAD AGAINST THE DECISION TO BAR TWO REFORMIST CANDIDATES FROM THE ELECTION AND COMPOUNDED WITH THE U.S. THREAT TO WITHHOLD ITS SUPPORT FOR IRAN BECOMING PART OF THE WTO, THE AYATOLLAH KHAMENEI WAS FORCED TO ORDER A REVIEW OF THE DECISION." WOLFF